



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Office of the Governor

Robert F. McDonnell  
Governor

Dear fellow Virginians,

This Sunday, in cities, counties and towns all across the Commonwealth, Virginians will pause on the tenth anniversary of September 11th to remember those lost in the worst acts of terrorism ever committed on American soil. None of us will forget that morning 10 years ago when hijacked airplanes struck the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., and crashed in Shanksville, Pa. Even now, 10 years later, the memories remain fresh and real.

On September 11th, 2001, life in America changed, and the Commonwealth we love so deeply was forever marked by an unprecedented tragedy. Since that day, many Virginians and Americans from all over the country have made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of freedom, and we have seen the dawning of the next greatest generation of patriots. Almost 14,000 members of the Virginia National Guard, our citizen soldiers, have left their families and careers to fight for our country in the Global War on Terror. They have been deployed — multiple times in many cases — to Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere for the cause of liberty. More than 200 Virginians have died in combat since September 11th. Additional Virginians serving on active duty and in the reserves of all branches of the military have fought bravely in this war.

From the Pentagon to the Norfolk Navy base, Virginia continues to be the proud home of key military facilities, installations and commands that protect liberty and freedom. Virginia is home to nearly 830,000 veterans, and we cherish their presence here. There can be no doubt that freedom is not free, and the Commonwealth continues to proudly contribute to the cost of securing our priceless liberties.

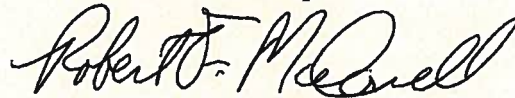
While I remain profoundly affected by the events I remember so vividly from September 11th, I find that my thoughts always return to the strength, resilience, faith, and love that, in the aftermath of the attacks, became the foundation upon which our nation carried on and rebuilt. I think of those brave individuals aboard the airplanes, making those final phone calls to loved ones. I think of the families left behind who worked to rebuild their lives. I think of the first responders who cared for the injured, and the countless volunteers who spent tireless months searching and clearing the wreckage. I picture the thousands of photos of missing loved ones and the message of hope those photos represented. I remember the flowers honoring those who were lost. I think of the police officers, firefighters and emergency medical personnel selflessly running into burning buildings to save others, knowing that they were placing their own lives in danger. I am inspired as I remember people of all faiths, cultures and political parties standing together as Americans, showing our strength and demonstrating very best of our country.

Ten years have passed since the attacks of September 11th. However, while those who sought to destroy us hoped their actions would bring about the worst for our nation, they profoundly underestimated the hearts and souls of Americans. The ultimate result of the terrorists' actions has been to solidify our patriotism, strengthen our resolve, galvanize our American ideals, increase our appreciation of each other, and help us remember that together we can overcome anything. It is why America is still the great melting pot and land of opportunity, whose shores people from around the world still yearn for in pursuit of their dreams.

As we mark this solemn day of remembrance, we recall that together we make up the fabric of this great nation. On September 11th, as we honor those whose lives were taken in these evil, unprovoked attacks, let us ensure that their memory will live on in all of us. We must always stand together in our determination to remain a nation united by strength, faith, resilience and love.

God bless America and those warriors who have sacrificed much for the cause of freedom.

With sincerest respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert F. McDonnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Robert F. McDonnell